

Message Text

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FOR HIRSCH

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 3341 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMMAN
CAIRO DAMASCUS JERUSALEM LONDON DTD 11 MAY

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LONDON FOR AMBASSADOR LEWIS

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IS
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH DMC LEADER SHMUEL TAMIR

BEGIN SUMMARY. TAMIR FEELS THE DMC HAS EMERGED FROM A
SLUMP THAT BEGAN TWO MONTHS AGO. HE WOULD NOT VENTURE A
GUESS OR INDICATE A PREFERENCE ON A FUTURE COALITION GOV-
ERNMENT BUT STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DMC'S CENTRAL
COMMITTEE IN DECIDING ON THE PARTY'S POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION
IN THE NEXT CABINET. HE DOES NOT RULE OUT AN ALIGNMENT-
LIKUD COALITION AND BELIEVES THE LIBERALS WOULD LEAVE A
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LIKUD THAT REMAINS IN OPPOSITION. HE SEES THE U.S. AN
INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT CAMPAIGN ISSUE AND INSISTS THE DMC
WILL SURVIVE EVEN OUTSIDE OF THE NEXT GOVERNMENT.END
SUMMARY.

1. CHARGE AND POLITICAL OFFICER MET WITH TAMIR ON MAY 10
IN HIS TEL AVIV OFFICE. TAMIR, LEADER OF THE FREE CENTER

PARTY BEFORE IT JOINED THE DMC, OCCUPIES FOURTHPLACE ON THE DMC LIST AND IS ONE OF THE FEW PROFESSIONAL POLITICIANS IN THE PARTY.

2. HE SAID THAT THE DMC IS NOW IN AN UPTURN AFTER SUFFERING A SLUMP BEGINNING SOME TWO MONTHS AGO. HE HAVE THREE REASONS FOR THE PARTY'S EARLIER DECLINE: (A) THE "ORIENTALS" WERE DISAPPOINTED WITH THE RESULTS OF THE MARCH 15 INTERNAL DMC ELECTION. TAMIR BELIEVES, HOWEVER, THAT IN VIEW OF THE ABSENCE OF WELL-KNOWN PERSONALITIES AMONG THEM, THEY DID QUITE WELL.(B) THE HAOLOM HAZEY ATTACKS UPON DMC LEADER YIGAEY YADIN. TAMIR SAID THAT YADIN HAS BEEN CLEARED AND IS NOW SUING THE MAGAZINE. (TAMIR HIMSELF IS SUING HAOLOM HAZEY FOR DEPICTING HIM AS A TROJANHorse WITHIN THE DMC, A CHARGE THAT THE ALIGNMENT HAS USED IN ITS ADS.) (C) THE REPLACEMENT OF RABIN BY PERES IN THE ALIGNMENT. TAMIR THOUGHT THAT FOLLOWING THE SELECTION OF PERES THE ALIGNMENT GAINED THE EQUIVALENT OF FOUR OR FIVE SEATS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE DMC AND THE LIKUD. THIS HAS NOW BEEN CHECKED. AFTER THE FIRST TWO OR THREE WEEKS OF ENTHUSIASM, PERES' POPULARITY HAS GONE INTO DECLINE. THE EBAN AFFAIR AND THE STATE COMPTROLLER'S REPORT HAS ALSO HURT THE ALIGNMENT AND NOW THEY ARE HOLDING THEIR BREATH OVER ASHER YADLIN'S TESTIMONY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 11 (TEL AVIV 3306). THERE IS RENEWED DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE ALIGNMENT -- AND ALSO WITH THE LIKUD. TAMIR BELIEVED THAT THE LIKUD HAD ALSO BEEN GAINING BUT IS NOW LOSING GROUND. MEANWHILE, THE ALIGNMENT'S CAMPAIGN IS AIMED MORE AT THE DMC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAN AT THE LIKUD SINCE 2/3 OF THE DMC'S SUPPORT COMES FROM FORMER ALIGNMENT VOTERS.

3. THE DMC'S LAST PRIVATE POLL GAVE IT 20 SEATS -- THOUGH TAMIR DID NOT BELIEVE THE FINAL RESULT WOULD BE THAT HIGH. THE ELECTORATE DIVIDES INTO NEAT CONSTITUENCIES: THE LOWER CLASSES SUPPORT THE LIKUD, LABORERS AND KIBBUTZNIKS SUPPORT THE ALIGNMENT, AND THE MIDDLE CLASS AND INTELLECTUALS ARE FLOCKING TO THE DMC. TAMIR WAS PROUD THAT DMC VOLUNTEERS INCLUDE "THE CREAM OF THE COUNTRY." (HE SAID THAT THE ONLY OTHER PARTY THAT COULD BOAST SIMILAR SUPPORT WAS SHELI.) THIS IS ALSO THE DMC'S WEAKNESS -- "THERE AREN'T THAT MANY GOOD PEOPLE."

4. TAMIR WOULD VENTURE NO OPINION ON A POSSIBLE FUTURE COALITION-- "WE JUST DON'T KNOW YET." MANY IN HIS PARTY WOULD HAVE LINKED UP WITH THE ALIGNMENT WHEN RABIN WAS ITS LEADER BUT DO NOT NOW ACCEPT PERES; MANY OTHERS WHO

NOW LOOK WITH FAVOR UPON PERES HAD OPPOSED TEAMING UP WITH RABIN. HE SAID THAT ON THE HUSTINGS HE ENCOUNTERED A TWENTY TO ONE RATIO OF PEOPLE WHO DECLARED THEY WOULD VOTE FOR THE DMC ON THE CONDITION THAT IT NOT JOIN AN ALIGNMENT COALITION. HOWEVER, THE DMC'S POLLS SHOW A LARGE PREPONDERANCE OF POTENTIAL SUPPORT AMONG PEOPLE WHO INSIST THAT IT NOT JOIN WITH THE LIKUD. TAMIR HAD NO EXPLANATION FOR THE DISCREPANCY EXCEPT TO SAY THAT LIKUD-LEANING PEOPLE ARE MORE VOCIFEROUS. HE EXPLAINED THAT ANY DECISION ON A COALITION WILL BE TAKEN BY THE DMC'S 120-MEMBER CENTRAL COMMITTEE (CC) PLUS THE DMC'S MKS. THE CC'S FIRST POST-ELECTION MEETING WILL BE MAY 25. TAMIR DESCRIBED THE CC AS VERY STRONG AND VERY INDEPENDENT. FOR EXAMPLE, THE PARTY EXECUTIVE HAD TABLED THE DMC'S SEVEN CONDITIONS FOR JOINING A COALITION (TEL AVIV 3166) AND RECOMMENDED THAT THE CC ADOPT IT INTO TOTO. THE CC, HOWEVER, INSISTED FIRST ON A POINT-BY-POINT DISCUSSION, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BUT FINALLY ADOPTED ALL SEVEN. TAMIR HIMSELF HAD OPPOSED THE CONDITION REQUIRING A NEW ELECTION WITHIN TWO YEARS BUT NONETHELESS IT CARRIED. HE SAID THE SEVEN CONDITIONS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION, BECAUSE THE CC WOULD NOT ALLOW COMPROMISE. SHOULD THE DMC JOIN A COALITION, THE CC WILL ALSO DECIDE ON DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS ALLOTTED TO THE PARTY. TAMIR SAID HIS INTEREST HAS ALWAYS BEEN IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND NOTED THAT HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE DMC FOREIGN AFFAIRS TEAM WHICH ALSO INCLUDED YADIN, AMNON RUBENSTEI, MEIR AMIT, MEIR ZOREA AND, NOW, AHARON YARIV.

5. ASKED ABOUT SPECULATION THAT BEGIN MIGHT OFFER YADIN THE PREMIERSHIP, TAMIR SAID THAT BEGIN HAD REACTED ANGRILY TO THE SUGGESTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, TAMIR FEELS THAT BEGIN IS BASICALLY AFRAID TO RULE THE COUNTRY BY HIMSELF SINCE HE KNOWS THAT DESPITE HIS PRINCIPLES HE DOES NOT HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS. TAMIR BELIEVES THAT IF THE LIKUD DOES NOT DO BETTER THAN 35-36 SEATS, THE LIBERAL PARTY WILL BOLT --WHICH TAMIR FEELS WOULD BE A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT. THEY ARE GIVING BEGIN ONE LAST CHANCE TO WIN. TAMIR DOES NOT RULE OUT AN ALIGNMENT-LIKUD COALITION. ASKED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DMC AND THE NRP BEING IN THE SAME COALITION, HE SAID THAT HIS PARTY'S STAND ON RELIGION WOULD GIVE THE NRP SOME PROBLEMS. THE DMC PLATFORM SAYS THAT RELIGION IS TO BE A MATTER OF INDIVIDUAL CHOICE AND THE DMC'S MKS WILL BE FREE TO VOTE THEIR CONSCIENCE ON ANY RELIGIOUS MATTER BEFORE THE KNESSET. THE DMC, THEREFORE, COULD NEVER GIVE THE NRP A COMMITMENT OF A RELIGIOUS ISSUE.

6. TAMIR OFFERED HIS ESTIMATE ON THE ELECTION RESULTS ONLY FOR THE SMALLER PARTIES. HE THOUGHT CITIZENS RIGHTS WOULD GET ONE SEAT; THE ILP ONE OR TWO; SHLOMZION ONE OR TWO; AND SAMUEL FLATTO-SHARON WOULD ALSO GET A SEAT. THE LATTER IS ATTRACTING SURPRISINGLY LARGE CROWDS; TAMIR THOUGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIM VERY SMART AND SOPHISTICATED. (COMMENT: FLATTO-SHARON IS A MULTIMILLIONAIRE AND A RECENT ARRIVAL TO ISRAEL. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS ATTEMPTING TO HAVE HIM EXTRADITED FOR ILLEGAL FINANCIAL DEALINGS. HE IS RUNNING FOR THE KNESSET UNDER HIS OWN NAME, ALLEGEDLY IN THE BELIEF KNESSET IMMUNITY WILL SAVE HIM FROM EXTRADITION. FLATTO-SHARON IS CRISS-CROSSING THE COUNTRY WITH AN INTERPRETER--HE DOESN'T SPEAK HEBREW-- PROMISING TO BUY UP VACANT FLATS TO DISTRIBUTE TO NEEDY COUPLES. THAT SEEMS TO BE THE ESSENCE OF HIS PLATFORM.)

7. NOTING THAT MANY VOTERS REMAIN UNDECIDED AT THIS LATE DATE, TAMIR SAID THAT THE U.S. IS LOOMING LARGER AND LARGER IN THE CAMPAIGN AND WAR AND PEACE IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AS AN ISSUE. RECENT SIGNS OF U.S. INTENTIONS (HE MENTIONED IMPOSING A SETTLEMENT) WERE HELPING THE OPPOSITION (TO THE ALIGNMENT). TAMIR HIMSELF IS USING THIS ISSUE IN HIS SPEECHES AGAINST THE ALIGNMENT, BY SAYING THAT THE ALIGNMENT'S BOASTED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE U.S. IS SOURING, AND AGAINST THE LIKUD, BY SAYING THAT RECENT STATEMENTS OUT OF WASHINGTON SHOW THAT THE LIKUD IS OUT OF STEP WITH REALITY.

8. TAMIR INSISTED THAT COME WHAT MAY THE DMC WILL SURVIVE. HE REJECTED CLAIMS THAT THE PARTY WILL DISINTEGRATE UNLESS IT IS PART OF THE NEXT COALITION. BEING LEFT OUT OF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SCARE HIM. HE INSISTED: TOO MANY PROMINENT PEOPLE HAVE SACRIFICED TOO MUCH IN JOINING THE DMC TO QUIT NOW.

9. COMMENT: AS AN OLD PRO, TAMIR IS BOTH SMOOTH AND CLEVER. AS HE NOTED IN THE REFERENCE TO THE TROJAN HORSE CHARGE, HE IS THOUGHT BY MANY TO HAVE TAKEN OVER THE DMC --PROBABLY AN EXAGGERATION. HIS ESTIMATE OF A RECENT UPSWING IN THE DMC'S STOCK, COUPLED WITH SOME DROP IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ALIGNMENT'S SUPPORT, SQUARES WITH WHAT WE HAVE BEEN HEARING

IN THE PAST WEEK -- THOUGH TAMIR MAY HAVE INFLATED THE
TREND. WE ALSO AGREE THAT FOREIGN POLICY HAS GAINED AS
AN ISSUE IN RECENT DAYS, AS ISRAELIS HAVE BEGUN TO PERCEIVE
EVIDENCE OF A TROUBLED RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPING WITH THE
U.S. DUNNIGAN
UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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